District Review Report
Final

School District No. 87 (Stikine)

April 28 - 30, 2003

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Terrance Sullivan, Superintendent SD No. 73 (Kamloops/Thompson)

104-06656/

School District No. 87 (Stikine) Review Report

District Name: Stikine

District Number: 87

Superintendent: Huia Martin

Date of Visit: April 27th – 30th, 2003

Team Chair: Terrence Sullivan (Superintendent, Kamloops)

Team Members: Lorna Williams (Director of Aboriginal Education, Ministry of Education), Rod Allen (Assistant Superintendent, Bulkley Valley), Susan Gower (Principal, Fort Nelson),Tara Gossen (Parent, Abbotsford), Rosemary Anderson (Teacher, Vanderhoof)

Context

The purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the District, the Ministry of Education, and the public regarding the District's work in improving student achievement by:

- Reviewing district and school achievement data;
- Reviewing the District's Accountability Contract and School Plans to improve student achievement; and
- Making recommendations to the Board and to the Minister about improving student achievement, and
- Identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

The External Team wants to express our appreciation for the welcome we have received by District staff as well as principals, school staff and parents. Their generosity and willingness to support us in the logistics necessary to conduct the review were exemplary. Their support was integral to meeting the challenges presented by the period of time provided for the review and the distances involved in meeting the criteria for interviews. We sincerely thank all who were involved.

School District 87 serves a population of 2,223. The District is completely rural and 54.4% of the population is Aboriginal while 2.6 % are non-English speaking. The District currently has an enrollment of 355 students.

Enrollment has been fluctuating since 1996. The Ministry is projecting that the enrolment will increase to 400 students by 2010. The existing enrollment consists of 211 elementary students and 144 secondary students. 64.6% of the students are Aboriginal. The projected enrollment for September of 2003 is 312 students.

Consideration must be given to the many challenges brought about by the extraordinary geography:

- Distances
- Weather
- Communication limitations

Summary of Process

The District Review Team met in Vancouver on Saturday April 26, 2003 to review the logistics for the visit. The Review Team was divided into two teams. Team #1 consisted of Lorna Williams, Tara Gossen and Rod Allen. Team #2 consisted of Terry Sullivan, Susan Gower and Rosemary Anderson. Team #1 visited the Denetia School in Lower Post and the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek. Team # 2 visited Atlin School in Atlin and Dease Lake Elementary Secondary School in Dease Lake.

On Sunday April 27, 2003 the District Review Team met for two hours with two representatives of District Administrative staff in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Team members were each presented with a binder of information including the school growth plans for each of the schools to be visited. District representatives present were Mr. Warren Cocking, District Principal (Curriculum & Technology) and Mr. Inder Mehat, (District Principal (Aboriginal & Special Education). District staff was interviewed according to the Ten Points of Inquiry. Team #2 met with the principal of the Atlin School on the evening prior to their visit to the Atlin School.

In addition, Team members reviewed the data included in the binders forwarded to the team by the Ministry. Data reviewed included the analysis of the District FSA results, provincial examination results, Special Education data and Provincial Satisfaction Survey Results. FSA results for each school were also examined.

In addition the team reviewed the following:

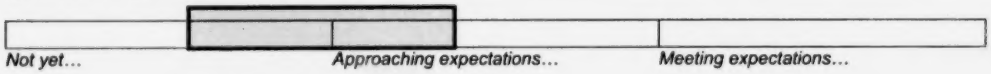
School District Accountability Contract
School Growth Plans
School Improvement Plans
School and classroom based data

School meetings were conducted with administration, PAC and SPC members as well as teacher representatives.

At the conclusion of the visit the External Team presented a report to the Board of School Trustees and the District Administration.

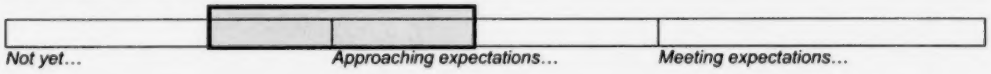
Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. Goals:
   Improving districts have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in clear goals for improving student learning.



   - All schools visited had goals.
   - Some goals were based on evidence
   - Not all goals had an instructional/student learning focus
   - Not all goals were clearly articulated

2. *Rationale:*
   Improving districts have a thorough and connected set of reasons based on evidence for the selection of their student achievement goals.

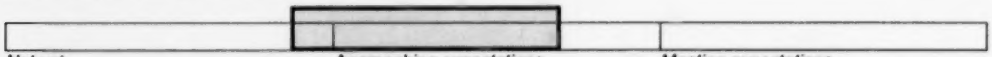


   - Many goals were based on perceived student needs and community concerns
   - Some goals were based on evidence
   - Goals for Aboriginal learners were not evident

3. *Data:*
   Improving districts are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school and district / provincial data. The analysis of this evidence has informed the selection of the district goals.

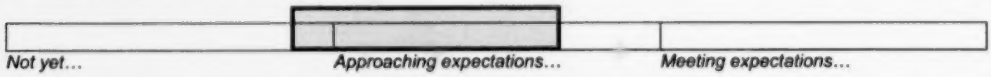
   - Various sources of evidence are available
   - A coordinated district focus on using provincial, district, and school data to support student progress was not evident

4. *Strategies:*
Improving districts have a well-organized, focused improvement plan in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



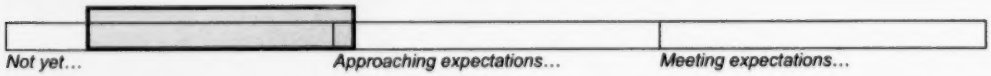
- Some district wide strategies such as Reading Mastery at the primary level
- Successful implementation strategies for district initiatives need to be in place
- The school district needs to build capacity in shared leadership in support of student achievement
- There needs to be a balance between school-based initiatives and district initiatives in support of student achievement

5. *Structures:*
Improving districts have aligned structures – resources, time, and organizations – to get the results they want. This includes effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



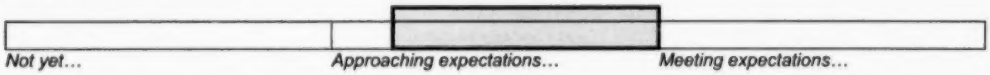
- Some school structures have been developed to support school goals
- There is evidence that most schools are aligning structures and resources in support of school goals
- Structures that are available are not being fully utilized

6. *Results:*
Improving districts get improved student learning results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



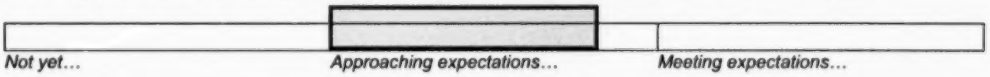
- More effort needs to be expended in establishing baseline data at both school and district levels
- Existing performance targets need to be refined
- Data needs to be analyzed to determine student achievement results

7. *Communication:*
Improving districts communicate and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made.



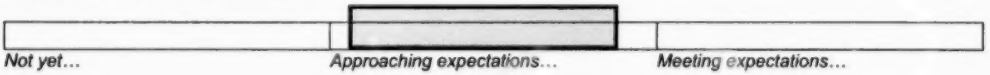
- There is evidence of many innovative ways of communicating with the communities at the district and school level
- The content of these communications needs to become more focused on student progress
- Communication with Aboriginal communities needs to be improved

8. *Teamwork*: District and School Coherence
Improving districts have a dynamic and interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school district directions are both valued.



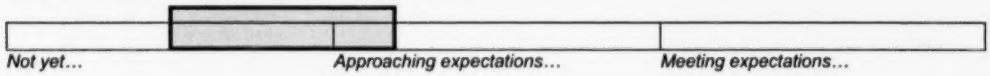
- There is very clear evidence to suggest that school and district goals are aligned
- An evolving strategy needs to be established to ensure that school and district goals, based on data, continue to be aligned

9. *Teamwork*: District and Parent Involvement
Improving districts work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, on improving student learning.



- There is very clear evidence of strong parental support, at the school level, for student achievement initiatives
- The district needs to develop strategies to support increased meaningful parental involvement and to build on existing successes
- The district needs to continue to align resources to actively support the continuing development and functioning of PACs and SPCs

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*
Improving districts are led by district leaders with a clear vision for and commitment to school improvement and improving student achievement. Principals, vice principals, teacher, parent and student leadership is encouraged and systematically developed – with a focus on improving student learning.



- District leadership has initiated changes in technology to improve communication, has provided support for the establishment of School Planning Councils and School Improvement Plans and has provided funding in the budget to support the new model.
- Board meetings and principals meetings are rotated through various communities in the District
- The district organizational structures need to be examined and revised to better support student achievement
- More opportunities and support need to be provided for principals, teachers, and parents to demonstrate leadership at the district level
- The district needs to foster a culture of meaningful collaboration among district stakeholders to support student achievement
- The district needs to develop a clear understanding of where they are going, how they are going to get there, and how they will know when they are there

Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement at specific schools.

- A strong commitment for education by the Aboriginal community
- We saw many examples of " best practice" teaching throughout the district. Every effort should be made to share these with the rest of the district.
- In every school community there were educational leaders committed to improving student achievement
- District initiatives in technology
- Pride, utilization, and maintenance of school facilities
- Staff willingness to not let distances stand in the way of providing their students with curricular and extra-curricular opportunities

Promising Practices

District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus.

- Creative "small-school" solutions to timetabling and course development
- Extraordinary examples of community driven Aboriginal parent involvement
- Strategies to communicate district information to the community at large
- District practice of rotating Board and principal meetings throughout the district

Recommendations

Team recommendations for strengthening school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results.

- An Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement needs to be in place
- District-wide professional development in all areas related to assessment literacy, including the collection, analysis, and maintenance of school and district data needs to begin
- A coordinated district focus on using data to support student progress needs to be in place
- The district organizational structures need to be examined and revised to better support student achievement
- A comprehensive Accountability Contract needs to be in place by October 31, 2003. It must include:
  - clearly stated, student focused goals, based on School Improvement Plans from all schools in the district
  - a clear data-based rationale which includes FSA results, graduation rates, and other school-based data
  - a clear plan for measuring progress
  - clearly stated district strategies and implementation plan
  - a clear statement of how the district will support the schools in implementing their School Improvement Plans

Follow Up (to be determined by Ministry of Education)

Required follow up with specific time frame may take the form of:

- Ministry phone call
- Deputy Minister visit
- District report to the Ministry
- Review of the next year's district contract
- Special Advisor appointment